

Crop rotation, no till work wonders



About Larry Young

Larry's a fourth generation farmer in Kay County, Oklahoma. His great grandfather came to the Blackwell area from Indiana and purchased a farm 2 years after the Oklahoma land run. Larry has two brothers who are also farmers in the local area.

Crop rotation and no-till practices just work for Larry Young.

Although he said he can't explain it scientifically, he articulates well the benefits of both these practices to his farming. He took a break from harvesting to explain his crop rotation and no-till practices.

Larry came from a background farming dry land wheat with conventional tillage and grazing stocker cattle.

"It got to where I couldn't raise good wheat. It seemed like something every year would keep me from producing a profitable yield," he explained. "What has really started producing good wheat crops for me is the rotation."

Larry initially began with a milo-wheat rotation, then he added soybeans and finally corn. The main goal of his crop rotation is to break weed, disease, and insect cycles by avoiding back-to-back planting of crops. He feels like he has successfully overcome previous weed and disease problems he had experienced in both wheat and milo. With respect to insects, Larry noted, "Weather related stresses and things like that can amplify an insect problem. With rotation, I hope to keep their cycles messed-up, so to speak, where we don't have a problem develop."

"The early variety soybeans need a pretty decent July, and too many summers we do not get that." To overcome this, Larry switched to a later season, group 4 soybean variety and began planting more acres to corn, which can be harvested earlier and followed with wheat in the fall. "Of course," he notes, "Plans are great, but you don't always get to fulfill your plans—Mother Nature and other factors can affect that."

In his no-till practice, Larry's main goal is to rebuild soil organic matter. Other benefits include improved efficiency of labor and equipment use.

"Rotation spreads your risk; you don't have all of your

eggs in one basket. It is the only answer I have to the cost of machinery and farming right now. I can harvest every acre I farm with one combine," he said. With everything in one crop, he would have to hire help to harvest it. It would be difficult to justify the expense of owning a combine.

He feels he has saved a substantial amount by using less diesel fuel in his no-till operation. Chemical costs have also become less expensive in recent years, and Larry has learned how to be efficient in application timing and methods for various crops.


He had been getting by using a conventional disk drill to plant no-till wheat, but sometimes found he could not achieve the desired planting depth. "I had my heart set on an air seed, no-till drill—until I priced it—so I went with a newer style conventional double disk drill." He said the new drill has heavier springs and hydraulic down pressure. "All I really use it for is a third of my acres once a year." At half the cost of the no-till drill, Larry is pretty confident that he can make it work.

"I think the longer you are in no-till, the more rewards you will see," Larry noted. But he also pointed out that patience has been the key to success.

"No-till goes against what has been instilled in you as a good farmer. It is tough to get it through your head that this is better than what you have been doing," he explained.

He also said in a good year like this one, every field has a good crop. Other summers, everything is going to burn up—no-till and conventional.

For Larry Young, no-till crop rotation has not been a perfect system. But it has had its distinct advantages, and he has seen some personal rewards along the way. More information about Larry is available on our Web site.



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We are Areawide Pest Management for Wheat, a five-year project developed by the USDA Agricultural Research Service, to demonstrate pest management practices for the Russian wheat aphid and greenbug. Our main goal is to collaborate with wheat producers in evaluating and demonstrating non-chemical pest management techniques, with particular emphasis on the management of the Russian wheat aphid and the greenbug. The elements of our program include:

Crop Diversification:

- *Demonstrating how growers succeed with crop rotations*
- *Evaluate profitability and pest management benefits of crop rotations*

Variety Selection:

- *Disseminate current information about host plant resistance*
- *Share growers' experiences and choices with wheat varieties*

Field Monitoring and biocontrol:

- *Demonstrate simplified scouting*
- *Evaluate natural enemy effectiveness in diversified crop systems*
- *Develop remote sensing technology for areawide pest detection*

Best Management practices for Wheat:

- *Share growers' success stories with conservation tillage, optimal forage production and other wheat management practices*
- *Disseminate information about new technologies*

For more information about how Larry Young uses crop rotation and diversification, no-till practices and different varieties, visit our Grower of the Month page on our Web site.



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Areawide Pest Management for Wheat
Management of Russian wheat aphids & greenbugs



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